Communicative Language Teachin (clt):Pedagogical Approach

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INTRODUCTION

The English language is more widely used around the world than ever before, More and more people are using it in business, industry ,politics, education, and various professions. The more widely English is used the greater is the need to teach ,the greater is the need to train teachers to teach it .Ideally, of course, trained native speakers of English would make the best teachers of English; but the supply of native English speakers can't possibly meet thegrowing demand for teachers of English,and more and more non-native speakers are being trained to teach English as a foreign language. Languages are studied by more people than ever before and materials of teaching them are changing radically. The goals of the literature have broadened to include spoken communication with an understanding of native speakers of the widest range of human interests. In attempting to explain the great movement and change in the methods of teaching foreign language, we will take communication approach in language teaching as an example explaining and giving the readers some detailed information in hand and why this approach emerged and what this approach focused on in teaching foreign language.

The main objective of teaching a language is to enable the learner to communicate with users of the language. If a learner feels a strong communicative need for a language he will most likely have a strong motivation towards learning it. The communicative need is usually affected by the nature of the social community the learner lives in. In multilingual communities, for example; there is the need for more than one language to respond to the wide range of social situations. Learners should always be aware of the communicative value of what they learn. It is the job of the

teacher to help the learners to relate the language to the social situation they face. The teacher should create similar social context in his or/her classroom. Learners have to use the language to express themselves and, if possible, communicate with the native speakers(William Littlewood, ١٩٨٤,pp ٥٣-٥٤).

BACKGROUND OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING:

The beginning of the communicative language teaching went back to the late ١٩٦٠'s. In the mid-١٩٦٠'s the American linguists rejected the audio-lingual theory of language teaching. But the British linguists saw that in the situational language teaching, the language is practiced through using its basic structures in meaningful situations:-

Howatt ١٩٨٤, (p ٢٨٠) insists that "what was required was closer study of the language itself and a return to the traditional concept that utterances carried meaning in themselves and expressed the meaning and intentions of the speakers and the writer who created them".

On the other hand, the British linguists were of the mind that in language teaching the teacher should focus more on communicative proficiency rather than on simply mastering the structures.(J.C Richards & T.S Rodgers ١٩٨٦, pp. ٦٤-٦٦)

Before adopting this approach there were many methods and approaches in language teaching, starting from grammar-translation method, the direct method, audio-lingual etc. During the second world war the problem of teaching foreign languages and especially English as a foreign language for full communication was faced squarely. Linguists insisted on the imitation

and memorization of basic conversational sentences as spoken by native speakers. They also provided the descriptions of the distinctive elements of intonation, pronunciation, morphology, and syntax that constituted the structure of the language which gradually emerged as one mastered the basic sameness and variations.

After the war the wide-spread use of the tape recording and other audio devices made it possible to provide authentic spoken models for oral/aural practice as homework. Then together with contrastive studies of the target and the native languages written for language teacher brought the linguistic approach to a high level of effectiveness.

With notable variations among different authors and groups the method and materials which today aspire to be up to date usually contain:

١-basic conversational sentences for memorization,

٢-structural note to help student perceive and produce stream of speech and sentence patterns of the foreign language,

٣-pattern-practice exercises to establish the patterns as habits,

٤-laboratory materials for oral/aural practice out of class,and

٥-opertunity for use of language in communication rather than in translation. It is known that learning is complex. It ranges from the acquisition of simple automatic skills to an understanding of abstract conceptual and esthetic meanings.

For this reason one is no longer justified in expecting any single development to solve all the problems of language learning. It requires scientific training to apply the best that is known to the teaching and learning of a second language. We, as teachers of English, all know that to perform professional duties one must be professionally qualified.

A scientific approach to language teaching applies the best that is known to teach particular class and its students. When a better way to teach something is reported, the teacher incorporates it into his/her courses, just as a physician incorporates into his practice new and more effective ways for treating each disease. So in order to understand language more fully and reflect this understanding in teaching, the teacher might familiarize himself with the major change that the language has undergone in its history.For example: why, in English, spelling does not coincide with pronunciation and how the irregular preterits came to be what they are.Communicative language teaching was radical departure from (٣ppps) type lessons (presentation, practice, production) which had tended to dominate language teaching.(Jeremy Harmer,١٩٩٨, p.٦٥)

Communicative language teaching has two main strands: the first is that language is not just bits of grammar, it also involves language functions, such as monitoring, agreeing and disagreeing, suggesting etc. which students should learn how to use. They also need to be aware of the need for appropriateness when talking and writing to people in terms of the kind of language they use(formal, informal, tentative, technical etc.).

The second strand of communicative language teaching developed from the idea that if students get enough exposure to language and opportunities for its use, and if they are motivated, then language learning will take care of itself, in other words, the focus of much communicative language teaching becomes what we call activated and study tends to be down played to some extent. The communicative approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with other methods of teaching foreign language. They felt that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language. They did not know how to communicate using

appropriate social language, gestures or expressions, in brief, they were at loss to communicate in the culture of the language studied.

COMMUNICATION AND COMUNICATION COMPETENCE

From reviewing literature on this approach we come to the conclusion that this approach relies upon communication and communication competence.We should know whatthese two terms mean in communicative language teaching.

Communication: language is used for communication for this reason communicative language teaching makes use of communication to teach language. Whereas traditional language teaching places a lot of emphasis on grammar rules and verb conjugation. Communicative language teaching emphasizes real-life situations and communications in context, while grammar is still important in the communicative language teaching classroom, the emphasis is on communicating a message.

When we use communicative approach we use the knowledge overly. this means that students have three stages of learning a language:

a-receiving knowledge ,

b-fixing it in the memory by repeating it,and

c-using the knowledge by real practice.

In other words when a teacher says:

'This house is beautiful.'   or

'This is my car.'

the student is receiving knowledge when he answers questions like:

'What color is this car?'

'Whose book is this?'

he is fixing the knowledge in his memory. When the teacher asks his student to do some activities like:

'Bring me the red book on the table.'

and he brings it he is using knowledge.

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Like audio-lingual method of language teaching which relies on repetition and drills , the real-life situation changes from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics.

The learners ,asNasar says, needs to"experience the language, live in it not merely understand it; every movement, every process, every wish, every need must be introduced by words, accompanied by words, commented on in words and followed by words. But action should always come before expression (Nasar,R . ١٩٧٢ p ١٤٣).

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE:

The communication competence means the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of language in order to form grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom.

The communication competence includes:

١-knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the language,

٢-knowledge of rules of speaking(knowing) how to begin and end a conversation, knowing what topics may be talked about in different types of speech events, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations,

٣-knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks and invitations,

٤-knowing how to use a request language appropriately. When someone likes to communicate with others, he must recognize the social setting, his relationship to the other persons and the types of language that can be used for a particular occasion. He must also be able to interpret written or spoken sentences within the total context in which they are used. For example: the English statement:

'It is rather cold in here.'

could be a request, particularly to someone in a lower role relationship, to close a window or a door or to run on a heating. In brief, we can say that communication competence means the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately.

Willkins ١٩٧٦, in discussing this approach maintains that:

This approach emphasizes that functional use of language. It teaches the language needed to express, and understand different kinds of functions, such as requesting, describing, expressing likes or dislikes, etc. It aims to use language appropriately in different types of situations; using language to describe the performance of different kinds of tasks , example:

'To solve puzzles, to get information,Etc'; using language for social interaction with other people.

THE BASIC CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING:

After overviewing a lot of literature written on this approach we can summarize some of the features of this approach:

١-Language is a system for the expression of meaning.

٢-The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.

٣-The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.

٤-The primary units of language are not merely as grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning.

David Wanye (١٩٩١) gives a list of some features of CLT:

١-An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language,

٢-The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation,

٣-The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but on the learning management process,

٤-An enhancement of learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning with language activities out-side the classroom.

These main features are claimed by practitioners of CLT to show that they

are very interested in the needs and desires of their learners as well as the connection between the language as it is taught in their classroom. So they believe that any teaching practice that helps students develop their communication competence in the authentic context deemed as acceptable and beneficial form of instruction. Thus in the classroom CLT often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency based activities to encourage learners to develop their confidence, role plays in which students practise and develop language function as well as judicious use of grammar and pronunciation focused activities.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN CLT:

The role of the instructor in the CLT is quite different from traditional teaching method. In the traditional classroom, the teacher is in charge and controls the classroom ,in CLT teacher serves as a facilitator of teaching process, the teacher in this approach has three main roles:

The first role is to facilitate the communicative process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning group. The latter role is closely related to the objectives of the first role and arises from it.

The third role for the teacher is that of researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities. Breen and Candling describe teacher role in the following terms:

The teacher serves as more of a facilitator, allowing students to be in charge of their learning, The teacher still sets up exercises and give direction to the class, but the students do much more speaking than in traditional classroom. This responsibility to participate can often lend to an increased sense of confidence in using the language (١٩٨٠/٩٩).

Finally, there are other roles of the teachers in this approach such as they can be needs analysts, counselors and group-process managers.

CLASSROOM EXAMPLE OF CLT:

As we mentioned in other parts of this research that CLT classroom is a notional functional syllabus, in this situation, instruction is organized not in terms of grammatical structures as often had done with other methods.In this model, a notion is a particular context in which people communicate, and a function is a specific purpose for a speaker in a given context.

As an example: the notion or context "shopping" requires numerous language functions including asking about prices or features of a product and bargaining.

Similarly, the notion "party" would require numerous function like, introduction, greeting, and discussing interests and hobbies.

Proponents of the notional factional syllabus claimed that it addressed the deficiencies that found in other methods of teaching English by helping students develop their ability to efficiently communicate in a variety of real-life contexts.

TYPES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN CLT CLASSROOM:

The communicative language teaching uses almost any activity that engages learning in authentic communication.

Little wood, however, has distinguished two major types.

١-Function communicative activities once aimed at developing certain language skills and function, but which involves communication.

٢-Social interaction activities, such as conversation, and discussion sessions, dialogues and role-plays.

Here we will not include the procedure in communication because of the variety of activities used we will just give a very simple exercise.

The exercise may be for advanced learner. It is called "eavesdropping". Instruction to student-listen to a conversation somewhere in a public place and be prepared to answer, in the target language some general questions about:

What was said:

-Who was talking?
-How old were they?
-Where were they when you eavesdropped?
-What were they talking about?
-What did they say?
-Did they become aware that you were listening to them?

This exercise puts students in real- world listening situation where they must report information overheard. Most likely they have an opinion of the topic, the class

discussion would follow in the target language, about their experiences and viewpoints. Communicative exercise like this motivates the students by treating topics of their choices at an appropriately challenging level.

Robert (Lado, ١٩٦٤) seems to be a great supporter of the use of conversations, for as he maintains that "they present words in sentence structures in context".(Lado, ١٩٦٤ p ٥١). He emphasizes the importance of using conversational dialog which he says "are preferable to poetry or formal prose" because they provide a wider range of basic constructions of the language in actual situations.

Klein emphasizes the need of learning through social interaction in the process of the language acquisition. He says: "the learner is obliged to bear all the knowledge available to him (I.e., his particular variety + contextual knowledge) in order to understand what others say and produce his own utterances". (klein, ١٩٨٦ p ٤٦).

When the contextual opportunities for communication become more frequent the process of language acquisition will speed up. This is because the learner is offered more input. He will be presented with a wide range of language elements (sounds, words, sentence structures….). Furthermore, the social situation provides him with opportunities of speech production.

Educators recommend that language teaching should be situational. A learner of a language should practice expressing orally all what he sees, hears, experiences in his circles of life; in other words he should be trained to use the language to express himself while experiencing situations of his family, class, school and community.

Since language is "an acquired oral system for communicating meanings" as Nasar puts it, there are two factors that influence the meanings:
-general contextual matter and
-cultural matters.
As for the first point there are three things that decide the meaning of what we say. These are:
-the meaning of individual words,
-their meanings when they are arranged in the sentence, and
-the context in which the sentence is said.
As for the second point, the expressions of actions are influenced by culture.
What is accepted in one culture may be rejected in another. Since the main aim of using a foreign language is to communicate ideas in the target language so learners must:
-know how to use the language correctly,
-be familiar with the appropriate situations in which he uses the language, and
-be familiar with the culture of native speakers of that language.
(Lado, pp ١٥٥).

CONCLUSION

The adaptation of a communicative approach raises important issues for teacher training and development, and testing and evaluation questions that have been raised include whether a communicative approach can be applied at all levels in a language program, whether it is equally suited to English as second language and English as foreign language situation, whether it requires grammar- based syllabuses to be abandoned or merely revised, how much an approach can be evaluated, how suitable it is for non-native teachers, and how it can be adopted in situations where students must continue to take grammar-based tests. These kinds of questions will doubtless require attention if the communicative movement language teaching continues to gain momentum in the future.

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